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Jan Hoffman, New England Yearly Meeting. Friend in Residence at NPYM 1989. Photo by Peter Schütte, Multnomah Meeting

On Marriage: No Safe Dallying with Truth

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FRIENDS BULLETIN
(USPS 859-220)
622 - 47th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94121
Telephone: (415) 387-5846
Shirley Ruth, Editor
Corresponding Editors
Mary Etter, NPYM, 3080 Potter, Eugene, OR 97405
Anne Karlstrom, IMYM, 2305 W. Hogan Rd., Box 9, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Marshall Massey, IMYM, 4353 E. 119th Way, Thornton, CO 80233
Elizabeth Church, IMYM, 4 Arco N.W., Albuquerque, NM 87120
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Assistant Clerk: **Marilee Eusebio, 1702 Baywood Lane, Davis, CA 95616**
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EDITORIAL

Where is The Spirit Moving Now?
— Jan Hoffman, Address to NPYM

I was graced by two incomparable experiences during North Pacific Yearly Meeting which is recorded in this issue: by Jan Hoffman's address on marriage and by participation in a two day workshop facilitated by Judy Brown of University Meeting on *Digging Deeper Spiritually through Conflict in Our Meetings*.

Jan Hoffman's inspired speaking (she used no manuscript) framed new perceptions concerning reality vs. issues and how Friends come into the truth. Coming into truth as a Religious Society, Jan reminds us, is not without pain, but is a process which demands faithfulness to experience and to personal truths, and the willingness to become vulnerable as we undergo its discipline. This is a process based not on a stuggle for power but on the experience of genuine openness toward emergent insights which can create unity.

The workshop on *Digging Deeper Spiritually through Conflict in Our Meetings* was based on the assumption that in conflict we are called upon more directly and intensely to be open, imaginative, vulnerable, creative and flexible. That these qualities arise from the Spirit. The workshop culminated in the group's writing of two sets of queries — one personal and the other for Meetings. I find these queries so helpful that I reproduce them here for Friendly readers to use as need arises. (My gratitude to Judy Brown for the Spirit in which she facilitated and for providing me with a copy of the queries before NPYM concluded.)

Personal Queries

Am I dealing with reality in my view of this conflict?
Am I willing to walk a mile in the other person's shoes?
Am I answering that of God in the person with whom I'm in conflict?
Am I tender toward the persons with whom I'm in conflict?
What is it about my personality which contributes to

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On Marriage: No Safe Dallying with Truth

by Jan Hoffman, New England Yearly Meeting

Great Mystery of Life, enfold us now.
Hold us in your very large hands.
Keep us safe under the shadow of your wings.
Be with us in our pain, in our joy.
Transform us, empower us.
We are grateful that you are here.

First I want to express my gratitude for many things. Your *Faith and Practice* says that one of your clerk's responsibilities is to maintain contact with the Friend-in-Residence. I want to report that your clerk has done that very well all year. He never batted an eyelash when I said, "Could you send me this?" or "I will need a place to retreat prior to Yearly Meeting." It helped me be faithful to have someone check in with me during the year and respond to my needs. Gery Hubbe has done that and I'm grateful.

I'm grateful to Raven, Donna and Forest at the Crystal Moon where I took my retreat and the energy of the Cle Elum Worship Group which is also present there. That beautiful setting provided everything I could have asked to center me and ground me in an inner space where I could hear the words I was to speak.

I'm grateful to lots of people who are holding me in prayer at this very moment, both here and in other places. I assure you I would be falling over backwards if prayer wasn't holding me up, because I'm a shy person and I don't like talking to groups. And I'm grateful for the people sitting behind me here on the stage. This sustains me, since I know that if I fall over backwards, they'll rush up and catch me.

I'm grateful to your Steering Committee for asking me to interact with all ages, because I believe a Yearly Meeting *is* all ages, and I love the chance to meet *all* of you. I met with Junior Friends today and I look forward to meeting with other ages tomorrow.

I'm also grateful for all that I've learned about you over this year from written materials and how it has enriched my whole year. I already had your *Faith and Practice*; in addition to that I asked Gery to send the following things for me to read:

1. 1988 Yearly Meeting minutes
2. Steering Committee minutes from last year
3. Draft copy of the *Survival Source Book for Small Meetings and Worship Groups*. By the way, I can't tell you how wonderful that is! I just love the way you address the reality here in your own Meetings and Worship Groups and share it to encourage each other in ways that will enrich and empower many outside your Yearly Meeting. I can assure you that Meetings in New England are going to love it. Right now I'm trying to figure out a way to fund sending a gift copy to each of our 85 Meetings and Worship Groups.
4. Your State of Society reports for 1987 and your State of Society reports on same-gender marriages. I was impressed with the depth of your seeking and with your willingness to respond to your clerk's request to write a State of Society report on same-gender marriage.

We have addressed same-gender marriage by a different process in New England. Hartford Monthly Meeting approved an inclusive minute on marriage which it asked Meetings in the Connecticut Valley Quarter to endorse in the hope that it would then be sent to the Yearly Meeting. My own Meeting is one of the eight Meetings in that Quarter, so I've been part of this process. Not all of the Meetings in our Quarter were able to reach unity with Hartford's minute on marriage, though my own was one of two who did. However, our seeking turned out to be so rich for us that we took a minute to the Yearly Meeting to share our process and some of the questions which arose as we addressed the concern. We also encouraged other Meetings in New England to join in our continued process of seeking because it had been so enriching to us; it broadened our understanding of marriage in general. New England Yearly Meeting 1987 heard Connecticut Valley Quarter's minute and instructed Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel to include it in a draft chapter on sexuality being sent to Monthly Meetings that year for their consideration. Some Monthly Meetings have discussed same-gender marriage and some have approved inclusive minutes on marriage, but not every Meeting has done so. So that's what we've done — worked at the Monthly and Quarterly Meeting level, not at the Yearly Meeting level as you have done.

5. Lastly, I read your *Faith and Practice*. In particular in yours, I especially appreciate the glossary, which I'd like to Xerox and send around. And of course, being a Quaker, I have a quibble.

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(No Safe Dallying: continued from page 23)

You say, "The advices and queries are a reminder of the basic faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of the Religious Society of Friends." (page 39) You also say that "the queries and advices represent a continuing exploration of our common faith and practice." (page 39)

I agree with both of those statements, but I like the distinction Iowa Conservative Yearly Meeting makes between queries and advices in its *Faith and Practice*:

> "The queries are a historic means of engaging our minds, hearts and spirits in a search for truth. The advices suggest the gathered wisdom of the corporate group, those realities experienced in our lives and in the lives of others. They do not preclude the possibility of new direction and the emergence of new insights, but are offered as aids in both individual and corporate search for spiritual fulfillment — a partial guide for our spiritual journey."

Thus Iowa distinguishes between the corporate wisdom thus far (advices) and the tools to help us respond to the question, "Where is the Spirit moving now?" (queries)

The queries and advices in our *Faith and Practices* usually change somewhat with each revision. The reason they do is that by responding to the queries in the light of new experience, our corporate wisdom changes, as do the questions we ask. As I look at the revisions in New England's *Faith and Practice* over the years, I am struck both by how consistent is the truth we have affirmed since our first queries in 1706 and also how change is reflected in our *Faith and Practice* through all its revisions, our 1985 edition being our tenth. We have made some changes in our queries and advices, but some early phrases are still there. Thus do we affirm our roots as well as the growth of truth among us.

I am impressed by the section of advices and queries on Family from your *Faith and Practice*. (page 44) It certainly reflects the present realities of "family" in many of our Yearly Meetings more than any other *Faith and Practice* I know.

I also found delight in many terrific quotes, some of which I don't know at all, despite my broad reading of Quaker writings. I think that's what we should discover when we read each other's *Faith and Practices*. We should all have some of the same quotes, and then we should have others that have come alive with life for us as we continue to seek for truth both in historic Quaker writings and in contemporary ones. This is evidence that we are doing our own seeking, including in our *Faith and Practices* things which have meaning for us, now. It is not enough for us to repeat texts which have become part of an unexamined "canon." Thus we enrich each other by having different *Faith and Practices*.

Gery Hubbe, NPYM Clerk, Norman Pasche, NPYM Treasurer and Jan Hoffman, Friend in Residence, NYPM 1989. Photo by Peter Schütte, Multnomah Meeting.

One quote which I was particularly excited to see was by Margaret Fell, her version of the peace testimony. (page 31) At the time I quoted it in my 1987 Friends General Conference keynote, I didn't have any source for it except the Hartford Monthly Meeting newsletter. This brings up my second quibble with your *Faith and Practice*: you have wonderful quotes, but don't list their sources. So while I was uplifted to find that Margaret Fell quote, I was dashed to discover I still couldn't go to its source and see the broader context Margaret Fell might have placed it in. Still, I knew someone must know the source because you had it in your *Faith and Practice*, and I was somewhat sustained by that fact.

And so I love your *Faith and Practice*, I really do. Those are some of the things I like about it, and I would like to cheer for you and the process which brought it into print. In fact, I'd like to see you all stand up and cheer for yourselves, because I am so proud of you for all these things you have done. Come on, do it... Cheer for yourselves!... Stand up and clap! Thank you. That was great.

What Am I Led to Say?

Now, what am I going to talk about? When Gery visited me to help me find clearness on whether to accept your invitation to come, he said you had two major concerns in the Yearly Meeting. One was same-gender marriage as a continuing concern, and one was a degree of easiness or uneasiness about diversity in theology, particularly the place of Jesus. These are very familiar to me; I've heard them before. When I spoke at Baltimore Yearly Meeting last year, their Ministry and Counsel clerk asked me to address the same two concerns. I'll be leading a regional (Quarterly) meeting in Western New York State in September and it seems New York Yearly Meeting is also working with these concerns as they revise their *Faith and Practice*. So you're not alone in your seeking.

Given these concerns, the question for me was, what am I led to say? I've been reading the above-mentioned materials all year, gradually, and those words have been like seeds germinating inside me. Then on my retreat prior to these sessions, it was time to see what words might have grown from those seeds.

Picture me on retreat, sitting in a plastic-webbed lawn chair in a field on the east side of the Cascades. This is the same field where the Cle Elum Worship Group meets in the summer, so that "worship energy" was also present. As I re-read all my North Pacific material - including your *Faith and Practice* from cover to cover in one sitting - the rocks in that field somehow became the Meetings and Worship Groups of North Pacific Yearly Meeting and they began speaking to me. It was a powerful experience reading all of that material at once, rather than in little pieces as I'd done all year.... Your words became touched with a living fire.

So there I was in my lawn chair with the rocks speaking to me of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. Off in the distance there was a hill with evergreens and beyond that a glacier-covered peak of the Stuart Range. Suddenly the evergreen hills became for me whatever insights I would bring to you from my experience, and the snow-tipped peak became whatever words God would speak to me in the present. I thought, this is a wonderful image of wholeness: the talking rocks, the hills, and me sitting here are all part of the picture. After one day out there, I just felt everything was perfect. What an idyllic feeling!

The next day I went back to listen more to God; I was going deeper and deeper into that inner space where words come from. Words began rising at a furious rate when all of a sudden, I became aware that something was eating my chair. It was a horse. It was nibbling my chair. Have some of you experienced how horses sort of "lip things?" They extend their lips rather like the end of an elephant's trunk and explore? By the time I became aware that a horse was nibbling my chair, he began "lipping" my head. I looked about and thought, " Yipes! I'm surrounded by horses!"

This is what can happen when you go too far into meditation. I thought, "Boy, this is just how God works, this is really that old Holy Spirit again. What a sense of humor! Just in case I get too romantic about my image of 'the whole picture,' God puts horses nibbling my head in it."

First I laughed, but then I was afraid, since I don't know what to do with horses - and these horses were huge. Then one passed in front of me and I thought, "Oh my goodness, maybe I'm between the stallion and the mare and I'll get trampled in the middle!" I stayed there, of course, and I was trying to re-center, but half of my mind was thinking, "Will I get trampled or not?" After investigating me and nibbling around, they all went back to grazing very close to me. As I looked around, I saw that I had placed my chair in the only shade in the field, and it was around noon, so that's where they wanted to be, too. We shared the shade and about one o'clock, not daring to pick up the lawn chair and rattle all that aluminum, I quietly got up and walked off and they didn't even seem to notice me at all. So if you notice some gaps in this talk, it's probably when horses were nibbling around me.

I wonder if that's also how it is with spiritual gifts: we're afraid of something God wants to give us, and there's no reason in the world to be afraid. But we don't know that until afterwards; at the moment, we sit there petrified.

Later that evening, the night before Yearly Meeting, three other people from the Cle Elum Worship Group and myself worshipped in that field at sunset. During worship, there was a wind tearing across that field; it wasn't the calm, sunny presence that had been there at noon. I thought, "Boy, these people are strong out here. They can hear God in all this wind!" It was fierce! I had an image of Elijah waiting for God in a cave and I wished we had a cave in which to wait, too. I remembered that God did not come to Elijah in the whirlwind, and so I

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(No Safe Dallying: continued from page 25)

waited for the still small voice, but it never came. The wind just kept blowing. So now I have a more complex image than my initial idyllic image of myself in sunlight with rocks, green hills and white mountains. That's what happens when you keep going down to the place of truth; just when you think, "Ah, I've reached it," horses or a whirlwind come to show you a larger truth.

By now you're wondering what *did* come to me to talk about. As usual, I found that what *I* wanted to talk about and what *God* wants me to say are two different things. I've had some great ideas all year about what to say, but when I went into retreat, I found that's not what God wanted me to talk about. God gave me something to talk about that I *didn't* want to talk about. I've been led to talk to you about marriage. I hesitate to do this because I'm actively involved myself in corporate seeking on many of these questions, and so are you. And I'm humbled by knowing I might repeat a clarity that has already come forth in your own seeking, so I won't be offering anything you don't already know. Further, what can anyone say that might bring us closer to a sense of unity in our seeking? I can only speak as I'm led and see what happens.

I intend to explore marriage from many perspectives, from your own and other *Faith and Practices*, from the Bible and early Friends, and from my own experience of corporate seeking among Friends. My hope, however, is that I will not just be sharing my thoughts on marriage, but that I also can convey a sense of the process by which continuing revelation might work among us as we seek a truth which responds to the current realities of human relationships of all kinds.

Exploring Marriage from Many Perspectives

While reading the material on same-gender marriage from you, I found myself being present with the pain there is on all sides of this question. Notice I say *all* sides; to say "both sides" seems to me to be inaccurate. There aren't two parallel sides opposing each other. It's really like a circle; there's a "position" on every part of the circumference of that circle. If we could just see ourselves on the circumference of a circle we might be better off, even if it's not a perfectly-shaped circle. This contrasts with "war model" thinking where there are two "opposing" sides, one of which has to "win." If we're thinking in that configuration, right away, we're in the wrong frame of mind to see a *whole*. So I say *all sides*, since there are many sides to this question.

I also felt the joy of new insight in some of your reports, where after real struggle, you were given some new insights that are very nourishing to you. Feeling your struggles, I thought of a quote from Isaac Penington: "There is no safe dallying with Truth." Forget about Meeting as a safe space; it's never a safe space where God is around, because you never can tell what God will demand of you. Penington:

> There is no safe dallying with Truth. It is easy to profess and make a show of truth, but hard to come into it. It is hard to the earthly mind to part with that which must be parted with for it before the soul can come to possess and enjoy it. Profession of truth without the life and power is but a slippery place which [people] may easily slide from. Nay indeed, if [people] be not in the Light and Power, they can hardly be kept from that which will stain their profession.

There's also a wonderful quote from George Fox in your *Faith and Practice* which talks about witnessing to people who "use the name of Christ and have the form of Godliness and are out of the Power." (page 31)

I connected Penington's division between professing the truth and coming into it with your seeking on marriage. Your *Faith and Practice* contains the truth you profess about marriage, while your State of Society reports on same-gender marriage show your process of coming into it. The truth you profess is on page 91 of your *Faith and Practice*:

"Traditionally, such public affirmation of commitment to one's partner in a meeting for worship has been limited to heterosexual couples." That's true.

"In recent times, committed homosexual couples have requested the opportunity to declare publicly their commitment to each other and to have their relationship taken under the care of the meeting." This has been true in your Yearly Meeting, right?

"Meetings may wish to honor such requests to take a homosexual committed relationship under their care by following the traditional clearness procedures and having a meeting for worship in which the couple publicly affirm and celebrate their commitment to each other." This has also been true in your Yearly Meeting, has it not?

This last sentence gives a lot of freedom to Monthly Meetings to do exactly what some of your

Monthly Meetings have done. Your *Faith and Practice* says, "Monthly meetings may do this." Monthly meetings are doing it in New England, too, without the Yearly Meeting saying anything one way or the other about it. So this quote from *Faith and Practice* is the truth you profess.

I see your State of Society reports as your struggles to "come into" this truth. This led me to ponder the question that Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth?" For one thing, for us as Friends, truth is based on experience, in the hope of continuing revelation. Again, it is Isaac Penington who clarifies for me how this continuing revelation based on experience might occur:

> "All truth is a shadow except the Last, except the Utmost. Yet every truth is true in its kind. It is substance in its own place, though it be but a shadow in another place, for it is but a reflection of an intenser substance and the shadow is a true shadow as the substance is a true substance."

Those truths we profess may be shadows but they are *true* shadows and it is by naming that shadow that we come into it and it becomes substance. Then what Penington implies is that the minute the truth we perceive becomes substance, that will be the shadow of truth in another place. So we keep seeking new shadows of truth until we perceive its substance right on to that Last Truth. But where we are *now* is true; it's not that we're waiting for truth, we have it, now.

Our corporate truth might be, "Some of us feel there is no difference in Spirit between same-gender unions and heterosexual unions; others feel there is a spiritual difference between them." That's one truth. Another might be, "Most of us find no stop to taking same-gender unions under our care. Some find a stop in calling such unions marriage."

At my own Mount Toby Meeting, our discussions have led us to leave the name of the relationship as one of the matters addressed by the clearness committee and the couple. We have no unity on whether marriage as a term is even a desireable one for anyone to use. Some people don't want to come within ten feet of it, while others want to assure that everybody has the *right* to use it. But while we have no unity on the name, we *are* in unity on taking committed relationships under our care and on having consideration of the name of the relationship be part of the clearness process.

There have been a variety of names used for same-gender unions under the care of Meetings. Besides "marriage," there is "ceremony of commitment," which you have used in North Pacific, "celebration of Life Covenant," "bond of life covenant," and "celebration of holy union." People have promised to be"beloved Helpmeets," loving and faithful "partners," "spouses," or "life partners." So continuing revelation seems to be at work not only in the committed relationships we take under our care, but in their naming as well.

Given my own experience in finding consideration of same-gender marriage broaden to a consideration of marriage in general and of Friends' relationship to the law, I was surprised by the degree to which you see same-gender unions as a gay issue. In mentioning resources which might be helpful to Meetings considering the question of same-gender unions, you mention material from AFSC on gay concerns, but no references are given on questions of marriage in general or on the tension between spiritual leadings and the law. At this point I want to emphasize that this is my limited perspective from reading your minutes, not from knowing you personally, and I hope you'll take it as such. Feel free to contradict me from your experience of yourselves.

As I mentioned, in my Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, our consideration led to broader insights. We found there are heterosexuals who don't want to have anything to do with legal marriage. In fact, there was one Meeting in our Quarter which, in Vietnam War days, had a request from a heterosex-

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Peace and Love by Mary Lou Goertzen

(No Safe Dallying: continued from page 27)

ual couple desiring a religious marriage, but wanting to refuse the legal recognition of it. The Meeting did not reach unity on taking that marriage under its care. We also discovered that disabled people and older persons on Social Security lose benefits when they marry. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, the law gives the benefits of marriage to heterosexual couples of child-bearing age.

We heard how Daisy Newman's book, *A Golden String*, was a particular blessing on her marriage to George Selleck. When she married him, she had to give up all her social security benefits. However, she had just published *A Golden String*, which was very successful, so she gained from its sale what she lost in benefits. I hasten to add that this story is unusual. We heard of other older people who lost income they needed to survive when they married and their benefits were discontinued. Some "live in sin" in order not to lose benefits and not being legally married is a source of distress for them.

witness to the limitations of the law, they might have thought differently about their Meeting's offer to consider a non-legal marriage.

However, I don't want you to infer that we are ahead of you because we've had this broad consideration. In our continued seeking on the meaning of marriage, there isn't any "ahead." For example, you mention divorce and remarriage in the marriage section of your *Faith and Practice*. Surely that is a reality in most of our Yearly Meetings, but you are only one of three Yearly Meetings I know who acknowledge that in the marriage chapter of *Faith and Practice*.

My own New England Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* (approved in 1985) doesn't have anything in the marriage section about divorce and remarriage. Our contibution to understanding these realities is the book *Living With Oneself and Others: Working Papers on Aspects of Family Life*, listed as a resource in your *Survival Sourcebook*. These working papers grew out of the concern in our Monthly

The further we move from a culturally-defined truth, the more we have to depend on the power of the Spirit, and that is harder because of our resistance to change, and our resistance to being transformed.

In our discussions in the Quarter we also heard of a couple wanting to marry where the disabled partner would lose all his benefits by that marriage. At the time, their Monthly Meeting asked them if they would like the Meeting to take a non-legal union for them under its care. The couple decided to get married, feeling it would be dishonest to have just the religious ceremony without the legal part of it. Sure enough, when they married, the disabled partner lost all his benefits. He had been very active doing peace and justice work as a volunteer. Without benefits, he had to find a job, getting an education in job discrimination in the process. In our discussions, one of these partners expressed the wish that we had had these discussions about marriage earlier. She had not known of early Friends' separation of spiritual marriage from legal marriage and their persistance in holding marriages under their care when such marriages were not recognized by English law. Had they seen a non-legal marriage under the care of a Meeting as a

Meetings for divorces within their Meetings and for responding to the increasing numbers of divorced persons coming to them. In response, Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel began sponsoring retreats and workshops in 1972, thus beginning a process of seeking which included both individuals and Monthly Meetings and culminated in the publication of the book in 1978.

However, there were many Friends in New England who thought that to discuss divorce was to condone it, and they objected to the Yearly Meeting printing a book with anything about divorce in it. The content of the final draft was not even approved by Ministry and Counsel of New England Yearly Meeting, let alone by the entire Yearly Meeting. It was published by the Family Life Subcommittee of Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel, who made the following statement in their introduction: "Not all Friends will approve of every word in these pages; the Committee itself has differences of opinion. But the Committee did not write these pages; the

Meetings of New England did."

Ministry and Counsel did find unity that some Friends might find *Living With Oneself and Others* useful and therefore authorized the Family Life Subcommittee to print and distribute it. As I have traveled over the years, I find Friends identify it with New England Yearly Meeting and think we were so advanced for the time.

Currently we are in the process of adding a chapter on sexuality to that book, using the same long, deliberate process of the original book. I believe its third draft is about to be sent out to the Monthly Meetings for their comments. Because we are adding this chapter, some Friends who objected to the original book have reread it. To their surprise, they are discovering it has "quite a moral tone!" They didn't say that when it was first written. Thus does continuing revelation work.

So we act on the clarity we have wherever we are, as we are led. You address divorce and remarriage in your *Faith and Practice*; we have published *Living With Oneself and Others*.

Another little aside: New England has taken the phrase "with the consent of parent or guardian" out of the sample marriage certificate in *Faith and Practice*, but you still have it in yours. So while you recognize divorce and remarriage in your narrative section, in the example of the marriage certificate, you've still got that little remnant of pre-divorce days. How many remarriages do you know about where the consent of parent or guardian is necessary?

My plan now is to answer the question, 'What is truth?" in regard to marriage in two ways. First I'll look at the present corporate Quaker wisdom on it as reflected in a variety of *Faith and Practices*. Second, I'll look at the Bible and the witness of early Friends.

"What is Truth?" as Reflected in *Faith and Practice*

Teaching the Quakerism section of two Quaker Studies Programs has been a great gift to me. For the session on corporate discernment, I Xeroxed the marriage procedure section of ten different *Faith and Practices*: New England (1985) , London (1967), North Carolina FUM (1985), North Carolina Conservative (1983), Pacific (1985), North Pacific (1986), Indiana (1976), Philadelphia (1972), New York (1974), and Canadian (1985 for marriage section only). The assignment was to read these *Books of Discipline* to see variations of corporate discernment as reflected in different Yearly Meeting disciplines.

I wrote some comments on those readings, and I'd like to quote from them here.

> "In all of the above Yearly Meetings except North Pacific, there is not one gender-related term in the introductory comments about marriage. There are references to 'the parties concerned,' 'persons desiring to unite in marriage,' 'the couple,' 'the contracting parties,' 'two individuals,' 'those contemplating marriage,' taking each other as 'life partners,' or 'life-long partners.' It is only in the actual procedure that the words 'husband,' 'wife,' 'bride,' and 'bridegroom,' are mentioned, although Pacific mentions 'wife/husband/partner.' An exception is Canadian Yearly Meeting which has no gender-related term, even in its procedural section, except in the model marriage certificate. In North Pacific, the Yearly Meeting's lack of unity over whether a marriage is a covenant between two persons or between a man and a woman is noted. Also, only North Pacific mentions homosexual couples."

Again I say, for all the seeking in all of these Yearly Meetings, you are the only one for whom the reality of homosexual couples within your Yearly Meeting is mentioned in your *Faith and Practice*.

"Only Pacific and North Pacific give suggested topics for marriage clearness committees." New England doesn't have that. After reading the assignment, both Quaker Studies classes said, "Let's send a suggestion to New England to take the queries for clearness committees and put them in *Faith and Practice*." They really liked that feature of Pacific and North Pacific's sections on marriage. What we have done at Mount Toby Meeting, because we have no such queries in our *Faith and Practice*, is the following: we suggested that Overseers give to clearness committees for marriage a set of questions on marriage from the Human Relations Committee of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (FUM) - note these don't appear in their *Faith and Practice*. To this, we added one query to reflect our own seeking:

> Are you seeking a spiritual union, a legal union, or both?
>
> If you cannot or do not want a state-recognized union, are you aware of the many legal contracts which can be drawn up to provide rights similar to those that are part of a legally- recognized union?

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We worded this very carefully because we didn't want to say that those contracts are the same things as a legal marriage because they're not. Any gay or lesbian couple knows that, but there are agreements that can give some legal protection. We also gave our Overseers a bibliography of books which give guidance to possible legal agreements and a list of local lawyers with particular commitment and experience in this area.

"Only Canadian, Pacific, and North Pacific address separation and divorce. Pacific and North Pacific are the only ones with a section on remarriage." How many remarriages are there in our Meetings? Lots. And again, you and Pacific are the only two who address this reality. "In the process of remarriage, concern is shown for the creation of a new family and clearness committees are advised to meet with any children involved."

"Only London and Pacific are very specific about early Friends history of marriage as being affirmed by Friends as spiritual unions when they were not considered legal by the state, as a way of emphasizing the religious nature of marriage under the care of a Meeting. "

Canadian gives further guidance on present day separations of legal from spiritual. Please remember that in Canada the religious ceremony and the civil ceremony are distinct as they are in European countries. So the legal and the spiritual marriage do not occur in the same ceremony as they do in the States. This is a direct quote from their *Faith and Practice*:

"If a couple applying for marriage under the care of a Meeting have an objection to complying with legal requirements, the Monthly Meeting must be clear that it is convinced of the depth of the couple's objections before approving the proposed commitment. Moreover, in that case, the Meeting should ensure that there is a marriage contract."

And under *Registration of Marriages*:

> "If the couple maintain a conscientious objection to the completion of civil registration of their marriage, the Monthly Meeting must be clear that it is in unity with the couple's plans before proceeding with the Worship Ceremony of Commitment."

Only Canadian recognizes the flux in our understanding of marriage itself in these times. Again, this is a direct quote from their *Faith and Practice*:

> "In these times of social flux, many Friends are questioning marriage as we have traditionally understood it. In the search for new meanings and expressions of commitment, we may find that we have no clear guidance for couples. However, we reaffirm our testimony that a committed relationship should be entered into only under a sense of divine leading with due care to avoid impulsive decisions which later can lead to much hurt. We also reaffirm that marriage is a lifelong, living process. It is a vocation and a commitment to be loving and nurturing of one another. The wedding celebration is only one specific occasion within that lengthy relationship."

There are Friends who find their marriage nurtures them and encourages them to grow, sustaining them as they form a complex web of relationships in the wider world. However, as Friends, we are finding from our experience that marriage as an institution has not been life-giving to some of us. Some husbands, wives, and children have been abused in marriages. The Celebrations Family here in your own Yearly Meeting certainly bears evidence of that. There is abuse in Quaker families, in good Christian, committed, married families. Perhaps it is the experience of this reality which has led some to distrust the law; it certainly didn't protect people in their marriages or marriages they knew about among their friends. The truth about marriage in our present day is very complex.

I haven't read it yet, but I have heard about Doug Gwynn's new book *Unmasking the Idols*. In that book he apparently talks about marriage as an idol. He says we have a false image of it and that worshipping that image is not good for our spiritual health. Has our image of traditional marriage lost its grounding in our experience and become an idol?

When Hugh Pyper spoke at Friends General Conference this year, he mentioned this book as well, but he didn't mention that marriage was one of the idols. He *did* say that an image which has lost its power becomes an idol. And that's exactly the message of early Friends. If the power isn't there, forget it. It's not the Bible itself which gives life, it's the Spirit that speaks through it. It's not the baptism and all the liturgy of the Church that give spiritual power, it's the Spirit behind those things. If it doesn't have Spirit in it, it's dead, and you need to call it dead, or else you're worshipping an idol. So our discussions of marriage are testing whether we worship an idol without realizing it.

From these ten *Faith and Practices*, I gained a richer understanding of marriage based on the experience of Yearly Meetings. The question I often found myself asking as I read was, "What experience led this Yearly Meeting to include this?" For example, Canadian Yearly Meeting has guidance about what happens if one of the couple has "an impediment of speech or otherwise, " and can't speak their vows. This made me realize how central to Friends the vows are. It is not rings that symbolize the commitment, nor someone else "pronouncing" the couple married; it is speaking those words of commitment in front of witnesses. I wonder if Canadian Friends thought of this "out of the blue" or if someone who couldn't speak was one of the persons applying for marriage in a Canadian Monthly Meeting.

Aside from questions of *spiritual* realities recognized by Meetings taking relationships under their care, Friends have had lively discussions on what legal recognition of marriage might mean. Some Friends want legal recognition for everyone, while others want us to take only the spiritual commitment under our care and have nothing to do with legal recognition.

Perhaps we want from the law what Margaret Fell expressed in that quote from your *Faith and Practice* which I already mentioned : "And so we desire and also expect to have liberty of our consciences and just rights and outward liberties." Again, are we as Quakers asking for liberty of conscience so that we *could* do anything? Whether we will or not is another question. Our leadings have to be tested, but the capacity to follow them without penalty is something worth working for.

I want to say, as well, that I don't believe there are "rights of membership" in a Meeting. There isn't any right to marriage, or even the right to apply. Anybody can do it. There is never a guarantee of clearness. If we come to a clearness committee thinking we know the outcome, then it's not a clearness committee; we are not seeking clearness together. What we share as Friends or regular attenders is the "right," if you will, to submit our leadings to our faith community. What happens after that is part of the process of corporately seeking truth. That's the right we have. But there's nothing to stop anybody from asking for support for any leading of theirs in any *Faith and Practice* that I have read.

I'd like to make two asides at this point. The first is a point that I made in my 1987 FGC keynote. I didn't know I knew this until I said it there; afterwards, when I listened to my own words, I said, "Wow! I do think that!" My insight: it's *reality* we're talking about, not "issues." When I was reading your various State of Society reports, I often found the phrase, "We are divided on this issue." I had to ask myself, "What 'issue' are they talking about? What is 'the issue' here?" *I* didn't know what the issue was. Same-gender unions are *realities*. There are five long-term committed relationships among lesbians in my Meeting alone, all very different, but all very real. A lawyer Friend says she is asked more frequently to draw up legal contracts for gay and lesbian couples making comitments to each other. So same-gender commitments exist; they are a reality, not an issue. To describe them as "an issue" distances us from that reality. The issue might be our *response* to that reality. But the *reality* is not an issue. And we need to acknowledge that.

Rae Vern Magee signs "Quaker Friends Meeting, I Love You!" Photo by Peter Schütte, Multnomah Meeting

This reminds me of one of my favorite phrases from Ursula LeGuin. In an essay called "Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons?" she writes of how in America we think that kids need to "grow up" out of their imagination and not believe in dragons anymore. So we feel we need to educate them from an early age to distinguish between the real and the imaginary. She says, "Children know perfectly well that unicorns aren't real, but they also know that books about unicorns. . . are true books." I have thought about this distinction between the *real* and the *true* so many times, but as I applied it to questions of same-gender unions, I found myself

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turning it around. For some it seems that same-gender unions are real; nobody would say they don't exist. But for some people, while they are *real*, they're not *true*. Could this be another part of the dynamic of coming into truth?

My second aside: There is a phrase that has bothered me increasingly over the years; it makes me want to cry or scream. That's the phrase, "This is a divisive issue." If we define something as divisive, it is divisive. I think we are all one. The Spirit that holds us all is One. It's a powerful Spirit. And we say we are divided because we are afraid of the power of God transforming us. If we say, "It's divisive," maybe we can think that people on "the other side" will change and we will be comfortable again. But how many of us want to think that *everybody*, including us, will change? There is a Spirit that can transform *everybody*!

We can't go away from encounters with the Divine unchanged. The story of Jacob illustrates this: He wrestles all night with an angel and walks away in the morning limping, wounded in the thigh. In addition to his limp, however, that Divine Wrestler gives him a new name as a blessing. Maybe Jacob didn't plan to change, but wrestling with God *did* change him. Maybe we don't want to change either. We want to be transformed, but we don't want to change. This resistance to change is hard on a Meeting seeking new truth!

While stating a false unity in a meeting is dishonest, I think stating a false division is also dishonest. It is too easy to simply say, "We're divided" instead of stating the points of unity we *do* have on which further unity could be built. To state only our division also can remove us further from the Spirit, the source of our transformation. The further we move from a culturally-defined truth, the more we have to depend on the power of the Spirit and that is harder because of our resistance to change, and our resistance to being transformed.

Early Friends often found their spiritual truth in conflict with their culture. That is why they developed disciplines of seeking, of discerning the voice of their Inner Teacher from that of the world. In your State of Society reports, many of you mention that this whole discussion of same-gender marriage has led you to look back at Quaker *Disciplines*, and to use them to try and perceive the Spirit's voice. I was heartened by that, and not surprised. I'm grateful to early Friends for showing me that the purpose of discipline is not to control, but to liberate the Spirit. We all want to liberate the Spirit in us; we are obliged to acknowledge the help we need to make this happen.

I'm thinking again of Ursula LeGuin and her book *The Tombs of Atuan*. Arha — the Eaten One — is the High Priestess of the Tombs of Atuan. At age five she had been ceremonially "eaten" and then brought up by priestesses who taught her everything that she should do. Suddenly the wizard Ged appears in the maze of tombs she knows so well. As she talks with him, she becomes very disturbed by the power she feels in him.

She challenges him, "You're a wizard. Show me something you think worth seeing."

He changes the heavy black robe she has worn for years into a beautiful dress. She begins mocking him for doing nothing when she realizes she's rustling differently. She is speechless as she absorbs this beauty.

"You told me to show you something worth seeing. I show you yourself," Ged says.

She replies, "Make it — make it go away."

So our truth can only be for our time and our place wherever God puts us, and it's going to change in different times and places.

We often don't want to see ourselves as we could be. We need help to be transformed and changed. We need help when our courage fails us.

I'm going to end this section with two reflections on help. The first is a story, a true story. A New England Friend who is very good at orienting himself was once lost in the woods without his compass. It was cloudy, so he couldn't even orient himself by the sun. He had no idea how to get out of those woods. Suddenly a hunter appeared. The hunter was drunk, and he was carrying a gun with a compass placed right on top of it. (Important fact: if you have a compass on top of a gunbarrel, the needle will not point north; it will point right along the gun barrel.)

The drunken hunter greeted the Friend with these words: "Oh, we're not lost, we're getting right out of here, yes sir. Oh boy, I've got everything I need. I've got a compass and we're getting right out of here." Eventually Tom got the compass from the

hunter and they found their way out.

The moral of the story according to Tom: "One of life's humbling lessons is that someone you don't like who doesn't even know he's lost helps you find your way."

I love that story. That's how we help each other sometimes, without intending to, not being helpful, but just being ourselves.

So that's the human help we give each other, bumbling around as we do. Then there's divine help. We need it. To call on this help, I'd like to read one of Judy Brutz's prayers, from Volume One of *In the Manner of the Lord's Prayer.*

"But when the Helper comes whom I shall send to you, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Creator will testify of Me." (John 15:26)

Precious Helper
who comes from the Place of Truth,
may you be known and revered.
As You guide us,
we will become
united with Your purposes
in our daily lives
as full sons and daughters of the Most High.
Give us this day what we need
to be able to receive You,
and forgive us
our emotional and spiritual deafness
as we forgive those
who are deaf to our condition.
Do not lead us into situations
where we will be tempted to stop our ears,
but do protect us from all evil
For yours is the truth,
the power to transform us,
and the praise forever."

What is Truth? Biblical and Historic Quaker Perspectives

I think continuing revelation on marriage can be seen in our changing understanding of adultery over the years. We now think of adultery as unfaithfulness to a spouse, but that was not the understanding in Moses' time. Adultery then was using another man's property. I credit Walter Wink for new insight on this through rereading the story of the woman taken in adultery in John 8: 3-11 (Jerusalem):

> The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, "Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?" They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, "if there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she replied. "Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus, "go away and don't sin any more."

What is "the Law" of which the Pharisees speak? In Deuteronomy 22:22 (Jerusalem) the law of Moses says, "If a man is caught sleeping with another man's wife, both must die, the man who has slept with her and the woman herself." Further on in Deuteronomy 22: 23-29:

> If a virgin is betrothed and a man meets her in the city and sleeps with her, you shall take them both out to the gate of the town and stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry for help in the town; the man, because he has violated the wife of his fellow. You must banish this evil from your midst. But if the man has met the betrothed girl in the open country and has taken her by force and lain with her, only the man who lay with her shall die; you must do nothing to the girl, for hers is no capital offense. The case is like that of a man who attacks and kills his fellow; for he came across her in the open country and the betrothed girl could have cried out without anyone coming to her rescue. If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed and seizes her and lies with her and is caught in the act, the man who has lain with her must give the girl's father fifty silver shekels; she shall be his wife since he has violated her, and as long as he lives he may not repudiate her.

In none of these cases is there a woman standing alone. So in the story from John, I imagine Jesus

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writing on the ground, "Where is the man?" Because the law says *both* of them shall be stoned. I wonder too if Jesus's silence is a challenge to the Pharisees' interpretation of their own law. But let us not feel self-righteous about not being Pharisees who remember their own law selectively, because sometimes we use Quaker history selectively in the same way the Pharisees used Moses' law.

From these passages we see clearly that adultery in Moses' time was using the property of another man. It had nothing to do with faithfulness. There was no punishment for lying with a prostitute — a woman who isn't anybody's property.

The story from John is a good example of continuing revelation that's regressive, since it appears that the responsibility of the man in the cases so clearly stated in Deuteronomy has been forgotten, since the Pharisees bring in a woman alone. We've had such regressive continuing revelation among Friends as well. Continuing revelation hasn't always meant progress. It has meant we forget to discern between outward form and inward power, as we did in the period when we disowned Friends for playing the piano or marrying "the wrong kind" of Friend. At the time, Friends felt that was continuing revelation, but now we don't think it was very life-giving. But we can be humbled by these events from our past, realizing that we, too, no doubt have confused our own insights with the voice of our divine Inner Teacher. So our truth can only be for our time and our place wherever God puts us, and it's going to change in different times and places.

In seventeenth century New England there was an advice on the responsibility of Quaker male slaveholders to the children they fathered by their slaves. So it doesn't seem like sleeping with a slave was considered to be adultery among Quakers in seventeenth century New England. We think differently now.

Caroline Whitbeck wrote an article in the June 1989 *Friends Journal* about George Fox and Margaret Fell's marriage in 17th century England and Fox's new understanding of marriage. She clearly makes the point that marriage is a *leading* and that Fox and Margaret Fell married as a witness to a changed understanding of marriage as part of the Quaker understanding of the direct way God could speak to everyone. To Fox, marriage was not a property matter. Upon marrying, Fox refused to accept Margaret Fell's money and property, his right under English law. He refused as a testimony to equality. This same sense of equality led early Friends to use no titles that would distinguish one person above another. They simply used two names: George Fox. Margaret Fell. Charles Stuart (the name Fox used to address the king). Applied to marriage, this means there would be no "Mrs." to let you know if a woman was "attached" to a husband.

In another departure from practice, Friends did not use rings, which would again be an outward symbol of "status." For Friends, the ring is not the seal of the marriage. What "solemnizes" the marriage is the certificate that states that the following promises were made in the presence of God and these your friends. Even today in those ten *Faith and Practices* I mentioned earlier, only one of them even mentions rings. This is Philadelphia, which states in a rather casual way that a ring may be part of the ceremony. But a ring is not It, for Friends. It wasn't then, it isn't now. My own daughter got married in October. She and her spouse didn't exchange rings; they didn't feel it was essential to their commitment.

So the counter-cultural tradition of Friends can be seen here in our 17th-century marriage testimony as well as today. Again I say, it is hard to go against a prevailing culture and that's why Friends have been so concerned with discipline and process. We have to try as hard as we can to insure that our revelations are coming from the Spirit and not from our egos or our culture or even from our Quaker history. I have learned a lot about discipline and process through my participation in Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns. Lesbians and gay men are surely a group whose witness goes counter to the prevailing culture. In their Business Meetings and Meetings for Worship, I have seen the truth as experienced by that community tested again and again, seeking to discern the Spirit's voice. After this testing, it is possible to stand clear in declaring this truth to a wider community, including a wider community of Quakers, many of whom find the truth as revealed to lesbian and gay Friends to be painful or "unreal."

At this moment, I want to remember early Friends singing in jail. There is not only pain and difficulty in witnessing to the truth in the face of a hostile culture, there is joy as well. Friends sang in jail because they were joyful at the power they felt in themselves to witness for the truth they were given. It is also worth saying that some did not survive the persecutions. Some did not sing in jail; they left

Friends because they couldn't bear it.

Still, now as then, our primary concern as Friends is perceiving God's will for our community, not satisfying people. We do not move forward in the truth by satisfying people's objections in a worldly way. We try to perceive God's will for the community, which may mean that some among us are unable to continue with us. We may feel distressed by their inability to do so, but after clearly testing our leadings as a faith community, we must move as we are led. For example, in Fox's day one of the first groups to leave Friends was a group whose Inner Teacher told them that the Spirit did not speak through women. Fox and early Friends wrestled with this group for a time, but there came a point when unity was impossible. Then Fox advised Friends not to concern themselves with this group any more; they were no longer in fellowship with Friends and it was time to attend to other places where Life and Power might be found. Truth is indeed many-faceted, and hard to come into.

discovered about violence and abuse in Quaker families to people who say, "Quakers are pacifists, so there can't be violence in Friends families." What about speaking truth to those in our Meetings who are alcoholics?

What about just speaking truth, period? I can hardly get through a talk of mine without quoting Thomas Merton at least once. Here's my one Merton quote for this one: "The arguments of religious people are so often insincere, and their insincerity is proportionate to their anger. Why do we get angry about what we believe? Because we do not really believe it ourselves." When I read this, I felt Merton challenging me to realize that what has sustained us in the past may lose its power without our even noticing it. We keep affirming old truths to provide some kind of stability for ourselves, and we just haven't noticed that those truths have lost their power.

Merton continues: "Or else, what we pretend to be defending as the truth is really our own self-

We have to try as hard as we can to insure that our revelations are coming from the Spirit and not from our egos or our culture or even from our Quaker history.

Once perceived, what do we do with the truth? I had fun playing around with language here. This may be where the horse was nibbling my head; in fact, I know it was.

One favorite Quaker phrase is, "Speak truth to power." I'm indebted to Paul Lacey's Pendle Hill pamphlet "Quakers and the Use of Power" for loosening the meaning of this phrase up for me. He states clearly where we Quakers would like to be. Since "truth" is spoken "*to* power," truth is on one side, and power is on the other side. Of course you know which side we Quakers want to be on, don't you? Truth.

It's true that we do need to speak truth to political power, which I think is usually the kind of power referred to in this phrase. But is this the only context in which we speak truth? I'm reminded again of Nils Bohr's phrase: "The opposite of ordinary truth is a lie. But the opposite of one great truth can be another great truth." What about the "truth power" of Gandhi? Truth has its own power. What about speaking truth to those living in denial? Judy Brutz has done this, affirming the truth she has

esteem. People of sincerity are less interested in defending the truth than in stating it clearly, for they think if the truth is clearly seen it can very well take care of itself."

So I wonder if we as Friends have a hidden hierarchical sense that speaking truth to power is better than speaking truth to people we know. Not to mention *listening* to others. One source of hurt for me is the sort of question I hear both in New England and in some of your North Pacific readings, "Why are we wasting time with questions of same-gender unions when we could be figuring out why we aren't attracting people of color to our Meetings?" The response I feel is, "Why look for people of color when gay men and lesbians are coming to our Meetings already ? They have taken seriously our affirmation that the Spirit can speak through anyone. They can share *their* experiences of affirmation and oppression." Oppression is oppression, as John Woolman wrote:

> Oppression in the extreme appears terrible: but oppression in more refined appear-

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> ances remains to be oppression; and where the smallest degree of it is cherished it grows stronger and more extensive. To labour for a perfect redemption from this spirit of oppression is the great business of the whole family of Christ Jesus in this world.

Maybe our Gracious Creator — I love that expression of Woolman's, "our Gracious Creator" — has given us these persons in our Meetings to enlarge our understanding of how oppression of gay and lesbian people affects all of us. Maybe it's a gift.

So, how do we speak truth within our faith community? An expression which occurs to me is used often by our gay, lesbian, and bisexual Friends. It's the phrase "coming out." We all need to "come out" to each other. In this sense, I'm using "coming out" as a metaphor for revealing by an act of will some essential truth about ourselves that may not be evident from outward appearances. And lots of folks are coming out these days in our Meetings. Survivors of childhood abuse, including children sexually abused in Quaker families, are coming out. Alcoholics and people who have abused drugs are coming out. Bill Kreidler gave one of the keynotes at the 1989 mid-winter gathering of Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns. He shared his own journey, beginning with a destructive relationship with a lover, to cocaine and alcohol addiction, through Teresa of Avila (whom he calls Terri), and Julian of Norwich back to prayer, a sense of grace and utter dependence on God.

Also those whose lives have been touched by Jesus Christ are coming out. This is one that I have experienced, because Jesus is central to my life. When I share my faith, some people respond, "With people like Jim and Tammy Bakker calling themselves Christian, how can you associate yourself with people like that?" Well, I don't like labels, but I know how Jesus has touched my life. The fact that others give different meanings to words I use cannot take away from the integrity of my faith. I hope in sharing what gives my life meaning with you, you will share what gives your life meaning with me, even if it's very different. And it's fine, too, if your feeling about "Christians" is different from mine, has made you angry at Christians. I was furious with Christianity when I came to Friends. So I stand on my experience and feel the integrity in yours. It's so easy for us all to think that the form in which Life and Spirit came to us is the form in which it will speak to our neighbor. Not true. Spiritual power has many sources.

In coming out of any kind there is vulnerability and risk, but there's also potential power. Revealing essential truths about ourselves can have that "truth power" of Gandhi's. First of all, this power comes to the person speaking the truth, no matter what the response. I had a friend who chose me for Step 5 of her twelve-step program. Step Five was telling someone outside Alcoholics Anonymous about her alcoholism. In my terms, she was "coming out" to me as an alcoholic, since I would never have know that from any of my contacts with her. In the context of her twelve-step program, she was doing that for her own healing, not for my enlightenment and education. It was a tremendous gift to me, but she wasn't doing it to give that gift to me, she was doing it for her *own* integrity.

We all want to be ourselves with integrity and have that integrity affirmed by others. That's what all of us want, no matter what essential truth our life has. It's painful to hear someone say "That's not your integrity because it's not *my* definition of the term." It's painful to hear that. So sharing our truth makes us vulnerable. This takes us right back to my initial quote, "There is no safe dallying with truth." There isn't.

I heard Mubarak Awad speak this spring. He's a Palestinian who founded the Center for Nonviolent Action in Jerusalem until the Israelis deported him. One of his insights that I cherish is, "We Palestinians found that the enemy was not the Israelis. Our enemy was fear, fear that someone else could take away who we were, could take away our integrity."

No one can take away our integrity if we are clear in it. There's a difference between defending ourselves by shouting "I'm not what you say I am" to a hostile world or a hostile person, and simply saying, "This is who I am." You can't kill that truth. Our "enemy" is the fear that someone else can take away our inner truth. I know from my own experience that if I'm afraid of anything, that fear will block my perception of my own truth. This led me to think about a Bible verse I learned as a child, "Perfect love casts out fear." So I looked it up in the Jerusalem Bible.

> In love, there can be no fear,
> but fear is driven out by perfect love:
> because to fear is to expect punishment,
> and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love." (I John 4:18)

My favorite thought on love lately comes from author Maurice Sendak who wrote the children's

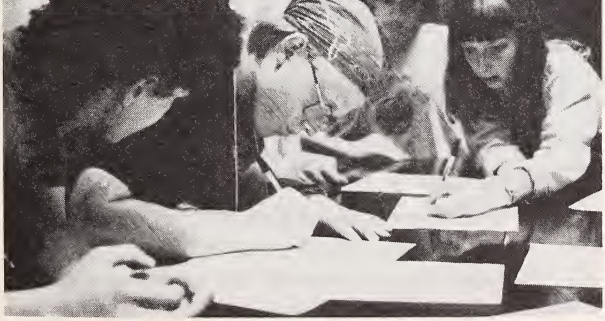
classic *Where the Wild Things Are*: "Our heart goes out to another, undeterred by what lies between us."

I want to encourage all of us to keep on seeking further truth — the substance of which the truth we now know is but a shadow — starting with who we are and who is with us in our faith community, letting our hearts go out to one another undeterred by what lies between us and opening ourselves to the divine power that can heal us and transform us.

I'll conclude with another prayer which came through Judy Brutz:

"I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of peace and truth." (Jeremiah 33:6)
Divine Healer who is part of the great I Am,
may you be known, and loved.
As you transform our lives
we will become people
who live in the Spirit.
Give us this day what we need to be healed,
and release us from the brokenness and pain
we have brought others
as we release those who have hurt us.
Lead us not to a returning to our former ways,
but do deliver us from deceit and corruption
For Yours is the place of healing, love,
and sanctity forever.

[Jan Hoffman is a former clerk of New England Yearly Meeting who has also been active in Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, and Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, as well as in her Monthly and Quarterly Meetings. She frequently speaks and facilitates workshops among Friends and other religious groups. She lives on a farm in Amherst, MA, with her husband where her two grown daughters sometimes visit.]



Young Friends at Work, NPYM 1989. Photo by Peter Schütte, Mulnomah Meeting.

Epistle: NPYM 1989

To Friends Everywhere:

Dear Friends,

North Pacific Yearly Meeting held its 17th annual session on the campus of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, July 19-23, 1989. The military planes flying overhead and the diverse groups sharing the wooded urban campus provided the backdrop of the world in which we practice our faith. From our 12 Monthly Meetings, 3 Preparative Meetings and 22 Worship Groups, 373 people came from a five state area. We shared much joy and hope for our Junior Friends whose vitality is an inspiration to us. Often they come from areas in which their faith and peace concerns are not shared by the majority of youth, so they are especially bolstered by their contact with each other.

Our first evening together gathered us in the song *All of Us are Members of the Family of Woman and Man* before we explored responses from our State of the Meeting reports. How have Meetings nurtured children and how have our children nurtured us? How have Meeting members shared from their lives and listened to one another? We shared images of children coming into Meeting as bubbles of light, and images of our own need to settle into the lap of the Divine One, embraced by everlasting arms, while acknowledging the paradox of our current difficulties in adequately staffing our programs for children.

Six Friends shared the ways that Friends World Committee programs had transformed their lives, including stories of a Kotzebue moon, a Fairbank Fell pilgrimage, and sewing machines going to Mexico. Our experience as a global family is both deepened and stretched by the work of the Friends World Committee for Consultation.

A presentation by Ministry and Oversight covered the Meeting for Worship in a way both serious and lighthearted. One picture that stayed with us was of a tree with widespread branches. When we are out on a limb we can't always see or hear how it is at the end of other limbs. How can we call out to each other, "Friend, how is it at your end of the limb?"

(Continued on page 38)

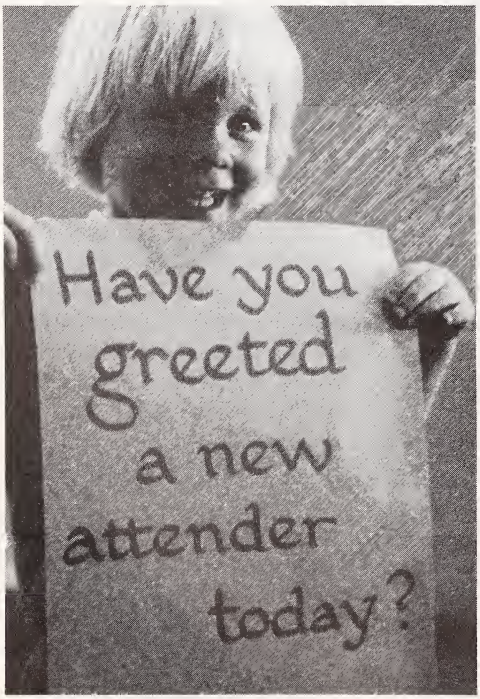
(Epistle: continued from page 137)

Jan Hoffman, our Friend in Residence, spoke to our condition about marriage and truth. Her preparation showed how much she cared: her reading of our State of Society reports and our *Faith and Practice*, her interaction with the presiding clerk over many months, and her four day retreat just prior to the meeting. With this as background she listened to the spirit and spoke out of worship as she was led. She set an example of tender process. She held a mirror before us reflecting our strengths and fears, reminding us that fear is a companion of change. If Meeting for Worship is an encounter with the Divine, we cannot expect to come away unchanged. In the words of Isaac Pennington, "There is no safe dallying with Truth."

We are well aware of differences among us, yet we sense a strong desire to come together and hold each other in love.

Signed in and on behalf of North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Gery Hubbe, Presiding Clerk



Child Helper, NPYM 1989. Photo by Peter Schütte, Mulnomah Meeting

Excerpted Minutes North Pacific Yearly Meeting 17th Annual Session

1-7 Outreach Committee announced the publication of the book *Survival Sourcebook, a Guide to the Nourishing of Small Meetings and Worship Groups.* There is a copy available for each Meeting and Worship Group.

2-3 The Clerk presented a letter of concern from the Steering Committee. The committee is seeking Friends responses to the query "What is the State of the Yearly Meeting Society?" This concern has arisen out of the difficulties the annual session Nominating Committee is having finding Friends to take annual session jobs, especially for the children's program.

6-7 The Junior Friends read a letter they wrote to the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Washington, D.C., regarding a member of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage from Jamaica, who was refused entry into the United States on the grounds that she might refuse to return to Jamaica. The Meeting approved Annis Bleeke writing a letter on this concern, to be submitted to the October Steering Committee meeting.

6-8 North Pacific Yearly Meeting closed with silent worship, to reconvene July 12, 1990, at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington.

Attendance at the annual session:
311 adults and Junior Friends
44 children grade school age
17 toddlers and infants
372 total

What Do You Do in Meeting for Worship?

Excerpts from a NPYM Ministry and Oversight Committee Presentation, NPYM 1989

Barbara Janoe: Some of us think in words in the Meeting for Worship. Others use images. This is an image which came to me in worship: I saw myself

standing in a pool of water — very deep and very still. I was really enjoying myself. The pool was fed by a stream. I saw a dead leaf. I tried to pick up the leaf, and then many leaves and sticks fell into the pond. I tried to pick them all up until I was holding back a dam of debris. I saw how ridiculous it was and dropped my arms. I faced the pool. The debris gradually moved out of the pool on its own.

Paul Davis: I need to become calm in Meeting, letting go of all stress. I need to let go of my sense of indispensability and of the awareness of the suffering of others. I need to pray for each one there, especially those with troubles known to me.

Monette Thatcher: I rely on all verses and teachings of my childhood religious experiences which come back to me in Meeting for Worship in verses and songs. Then I recognize new meanings in them.

Harold Carson: I look around to see who is at Meeting, and I say a prayer of thanksgiving that each came. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God and believe also in me." Fear not, Friend. Only fear when you offend the Spirit.

Ward Miles: I ask for God's mercy for all my sins and shortcomings. I also plan in Meeting for Worship. And sometimes I enjoy wonderful naps!

Monette Thatcher: In a forum in England called "Coping with Vocal Ministry from a Listener's Standpoint," the Meeting for Worship was likened to a tree. Each worshipper was out on a limb. "Tell me what it looks like over on your edge of that limb. I can't see it very well from mine." This helped to encompass and accept every other speakers' position.

Barbara Janoe: .... We ought to question whether every speaker in Meeting *should* speak to our condition.

Friends for 300 Words

The Memorial Meeting Nourishes the Living

by Mary Millman, Eugene Meeting

Why is the Memorial Meeting for Worship a gathered Meeting, healing and blessing the living? Is it because our vision of the person mourned is

Mary Millman, Monette Thatcher & Charlotte Wise, NPYM 1989. Photo by Peter Schütte, Multnomah Meeting

rounded by the many different recollections of relationships so that we see the whole child of the Spirit? As my daughter said after the Memorial Meeting for her father, "I never saw all those qualities in him expressed here today by others." She was grateful to the community of Friends for helping her drop adolescent anger and see him as a whole person.

Recently, the Memorial Meeting for a young woman who died accidentally inspired all who attended, most of whom knew her only in the last seven years of her life. In small concrete ways, she influenced her friends and coworkers by acting on her convictions about the environment and nonviolence. All present realized how much can be done by one individual in a short span of years, and we departed determined to make our own actions harmonize more closely with our Quaker convictions.

In the Memorial Meeting for Worship we experience the communion of the Spirit. For awhile we dwell in the Eternal. We see the *dividuality** of the individual person who derives her/his unique personal nature interpersonally through many relationships. I saw the beauty of one Friend's life for the first time because another Friend recalled her vibrant early years before I knew her, when disease had taken its toll. With tears, I expressed gratitude and forgave myself for judging her.

We discover anew that we are all branches on the same Vine. Indeed, we need one another to be truly ourselves. As George Fox said: "We are written in one another's hearts." (Epistle 24-1652)

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*Kakar, Sudhir, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*. © 1982. pp. 274-5.

Memorial Minutes

J. Arthur Campbell

J. Arthur Campbell began life in Elyria, Ohio on October 1, 1916. He died May 22, 1989 following a courageous three year struggle with Lou Gehrig's disease. Art earned degrees from Oberlin College, Purdue University, and the University of California at Berkeley. His distinguished teaching career in chemistry included posts at Oberlin, Purdue, and Cal Berkeley before coming to Harvey Mudd College of Science and Engineering, where he was the college's first faculty member and chairman of the Chemistry Department for over twenty-five years. His enthusiasm for life, for chemistry and for teaching led him to initiate and take continued leadership in a CHEM Study project which revolutionized the teaching of high school chemistry throughtout this country.

Art was widely known and valued in the field of chemistry. He served as a visiting professor of chemistry in several institutions in this country and in Japan and England, also Kenya, China and India under the auspices of "Asian Education for Science" of UNESCO. His wife Dottie said that when they were in these far flung parts of the world, they found themselves choosing to worship with Quakers even before they were members at home. Art, always a man of peace and justice, particularly liked to work with his hands doing plumbing, carpentry, painting, fixing whatever needed attention. These skills were an asset when he and Dottie, with a group of students, spent six weeks in Edwards, Mississippi, during the Civil Rights movement in 1964.

Claremont Meeting remembers Art in so many capacities. His humor and showmanship and his magical chemical skills were a delight to both children and adults at our Meeting Christmas parties. And in his long time service on both Property and Finance Committees, Art's way of using his probing mind, of looking at things from different perspectives, enlivened the interest and commitment of others on the committees. His spirit and dedication to the creation of the Meetinghouse garden kept the project moving forward in spite of problems. Art laid hundreds of stones for the dry stream bed, worked and edged paths with wooden strips, drew patterns to construct benches and then painted them, and gave patient guidance and help to Antonio, a refugee from El Salvador. Those who worked with him were aware that he gave his ebbing strengths to the full to create this lovely space where Nature and Quakers meet in work and worship.

Of the qualities Art showed us in his life, one thinks especially of the enormous self-discipline he showed in his last years. For a man highly articulate most of his life, it must have been a particular kind of agony not to be able to speak. The way he accepted his cruel disease leaves the memory of a gallant and humble man.

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Ferner Nuhn

Ferner Nuhn was born on July 25, 1903 in Cedar Falls, Iowa and died at the age of 85, April 15, 1989 at the Friends House in Santa Rosa, California where he lived for about two years after residing in Claremont for about 35 years.

Ferner was a writer and perhaps his best known work was *Wind Blew from the East: A study in the Orientation of American Culture*. He also contributed frequently to the *Nation*, *New Republic* and *American Mercury* magazines. Best known to Friends were his contributions to *Friends Journal*, London *Friends*, and other Quaker publications, particularly FWCC and FGC booklets such as "Visitation among Friends;" "Religious Social Concern; A Quaker View;" "Friends and the Ecumenical Movement" and "A Quaker Approach to Christ."

Ferner married Ruth Suckow, a well-known writer, in 1929. A pacifist by conviction, he travelled among CPS Camps during WWII. He and Ruth joined Friends in Tucson in 1948 and then came on to Claremont in the early '50's where they transferred their membership to Claremont Meeting. Ruth Nuhn died in 1960 and Ferner was active in establishing the Ruth Suckow Nuhn Library in the then new Claremont Meeting House. In 1965 he married Ruth's cousin Georgeanna Dafoe, and they had almost twenty years of companionship before her death.

Friends' process and the good order of Friends were very important to Ferner. He was clerk of the

Discipline Committee of Pacific Yearly Meeting during the 1965 revision of *Faith and Practice*. Promoting understanding among the various branches of Quakerism meant a great deal to him, too, and he wrote and attended conferences to further this cause. Ferner attended the 8th Triennial of FWCC in Kaimosi, Kenya in 1961, and later became involved in the Faith and Life Movement. He was also interested in the ecumenical movement between churches and was for many years involved in the Claremont and Southern California Council of Churches.

Ferner was a member of the Ministry and Counsel Committee of Claremont Meeting which started the "Quaker Dialogues," later called "Creative Listening;" he led many of these groups over the years.

Less well-known, perhaps, but most important of all was the quiet way he went about helping people in need. Most of us will never know the extent of this help so unobstrusively given to so many. Ferner was a true mystic and was very sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. He was an exceptionally kind and loving person and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Book Review

by Ann Herbert Scott, Reno Meeting

Daniel Goes to Meeting. **Words and pictures by Barbara Janoe, © 1988. Published by Family and Life Enrichment Service. Route 1, Box 403, Terrebonne, OR 97760. ISBN 0-943305-10-1.**

Friends working with children in Meeting Religious Education programs — or sharing with their own children and grandchildren at home — should welcome Barbara Janoe's new book *Daniel Goes to Meeting* as a way of opening up meaningful conversation about God.

In simple words and black and white line drawings the artist-author, a former clerk of North Pacific Yearly Meeting, follows young Daniel through a Meeting for Worship in which he is encouraged to "Close your eyes and think about God," as well as to "Close your eyes and look at the pictures you see inside your head."

Daniel asks himself what God looks like and rejects the pictures of a man with a long grey beard and flowing robes, or a woman with a bouquet of flowers and a baby on her lap, or a cat or a dog or a growly bear. He knows God must be very big, like an ocean or a mountain. "But if God is inside each of us, then God must be pretty small — like a chipmunk or a baby rabbit or a little tiny wildflower." Then Daniel remembers that his father told him that "God was a spirit ... something like the wind — you couldn't see God, but you could feel that God was near."

In the end Daniel closes his eyes and sees pictures of trees and mountains and chipmunks and his own family, holding hands and walking together enjoying the beauty of the world. At the rise of Meeting Daniel's mother mentions that she has seen him smiling and asks what he has been thinking about. "Oh nothing," Daniel answers, "I was just looking at the pictures inside my head, the way you told me. I think I saw God."

I shared this little book with a small group of children ages 3 to 8 sitting beside a stream at a Meeting campout. The children were highly interested in its content. We read the book through twice, the second reading at the children's request, and enjoyed a lively conversation about what we thought God is really like.

Announcements

A Travelling Ministry and Visitation Available to Western Friends

Teresina and Joseph Havens are interested in visiting Friends Meetings in the West Coast and Southwest. They have a travelling minute from Mt. Toby Meeting in Massachusetts, and enthusiastic responses to their workshops at Friends General Conference 1989. Terry's was entitled "Mind What Stirs in Your Hearts" — bringing Pennington, Woolman and Biblical writers to life through body movement. Joe explored a Quaker basis for a radical economic witness. Terry is prepared to lead a short version of her FGC workshop. Joe is more interested in just visiting Friends. They may be reached c/o

(Continued on page 42)

(Announcements: continued from page 41)
Pettit, 21 Pierce Mitchell Pl., Stanford, CA 94305. They expect to be in Oregon in November and Southern California and Arizona in January.

International Theological Conference for Quaker Women

This conference is arranged by Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and Earlham School of Religion with the support of Friends World Committee for Consultation. The conference is to be held at Woodbrooke, Birmingham, England. It is an opportunity for some 65 Quaker women — workers with women, teachers, pastors, recorded ministers and other women using their gifts in appropriate settings — to reflect together on what it means to be a woman, to be Quaker and to be doing theology.

Friends will appreciate that there will need to be a process of selection and invitation to ensure that the gathering can be as representative as possible. ***Applications are sought by 31 October 1989.*** Those selected to attend will be notified by January 1990. The cost will be $280. It is hoped that some bursary help will be available to assist those coming from economically deprived countries.

Application forms and further details from: Judith Middleton, Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, IN 47374. Telephone: (317) 983-1423.

News of Meetings

by Lois Vincent, San Fernando Meeting

Santa Barbara Meeting reports that after a closure of a year they are to be allowed to resume conducting a Meeting for Worship at Lompoc prison. Anyone willing to go through the red tape of filling out forms, taking tests, being questioned by the FBI, obtaining permission of prison authorities, can participate. Two hours will be allowed this time instead of just one, which will give time for personal discussion after the Meeting. The Peace Committee of this Meeting is also supporting the anti-death penalty march from Sacramento to San Quentin on October 22nd.

The small ***Hemet Meeting*** has a unique place in Quakerism. It is the home meeting of Ann and John Rush, who are devoting their lives to keeping alive the message of Peace Pilgrim. This message brings visitors from over the world to join in the worship of the dozen or so of the Meeting. Visitors from India are common. Some visitors have even come from Russia. Also attending at times are visitors from the B'Hai community from nearby Murietta Springs. The encouraging word from ***Hemet Friends*** is that Peace Pilgrim's message is ever-growing. Over a hundred thousand Peace Pilgrim books and four hundred thousand of the pamphlet, *Steps*, have been sent out. The book is being translated into Spanish and Japanese. The pamphlet will soon be in print in Russian and has been translated into Chinese. Offers have come to translate it from Poland, Holland, Denmark, Indonesia, Sweden and France.

The ***Orange County Meeting*** *Quaker Courier* notes a kite-flying and crocheting picnic at the end of summer. Kite kits were provided at First Day School but others were invited to bring their own. The crocheting was of squares for an afghan — for some worthy purpose no doubt.

Claremont Meeting's *Weekly Notices* invites interested people to a letter-writing session on the Middle East after worship. Paper and envelopes are furnished. ***Santa Barbara Meeting*** plans a similar session on the death penalty concern.

Santa Monica's *Friendly Notes* reports that classes on Christianity and other religious traditions were led by member Anthony Manousos this summer. The classes focused on Buddhism, Sufism, Native American spirituality and Hinduism. They sparked an interesting article by him in the *Notes* entitled "All God's Creatures Got a Place in the Choir."

Out of a concern that abused and neglected children and disabled adults do not receive the services and protection needed because of too few social workers, ***Orange Grove Meeting*** approved a resolution supporting a cap on the number of cases which can be assigned to each county social worker.

Follow-up: The letters and pictures from the children of ***Orange Grove Meeting's*** firstday school were received by the ***Managua Worship Group*** and were shared with a daycare center for children of Salvadorean refugees.

Anthony Manousos' book, *The Human Experience*, a combination of stories from Soviet and American writers, was featured in *Soviet Life*, the cultural exchange magazine from Russia.

A member of ***San Fernando Valley Meeting*** has built two successful solar cookers and enjoyed using one all summer in the heat of the Valley.

(Editorial: continued from page 22)

this conflict?
What is it about my behavior in this conflict which contributes to it?
Am I acting with enough or too much constraint?
Am I acting in retaliation?
Am I acting with profound respect for the other person?
Am I seeking the relationship which might emerge beyond the conflict?
Is there anything in my past to make it difficult for me to be flexible in this conflict?
Does the conflict bring into the open some area of ambivalence on which I need to seek personal clarity?
Am I being too judgmental?
Do I trust the spirit to work in this conflict?
Am I willing to admit I am wrong?
Am I using the transformational tools including process we have as Friends?
Are there issues I am avoiding?
Am I communicating honestly with other people?
Do I use process to avoid conflict?
Am I willing to undergo the discipline of process?

Queries for Our Meetings

Are we using the transformational tools available in Friends' tradition?
Are we working to build trust in one another?
Are we approaching this conflict in expectant waiting for the promptings of the Divine Spirit? Is there a living silence in which we are drawn together by the power of God as we understand it?
What is our essential spiritual unity?

I am pleased to announce that Helen Bross of the Montana Gathering of Friends will report periodically on news of Montana Meetings and that Diane Pasta will be the reporter for Northwest Quarterly Meeting. Jan Kjerne from Willamette Quarterly Meeting will be the reporter for its Meetings. They would appreciate receiving newsletters from their regional Meetings.

Shirley Ruth

Advertisements

All ads submitted must be consistent with the beliefs and testimonies of Friends. $.40 per word. Minimum charge $8.00. Add 10% if boxed. ALL ADS MUST BE PREPAID, payment accompanying copy. Graphic services available through *Friends Bulletin.* Write for an estimate. Send for information sheet with prices for display advertisements and mechanical requirements. Copy deadline: 45 days prior to publication. Publishing of advertisements does not imply endorsement by *Friends Bulletin.*

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HOST SEARCH
San Francisco Friends Meeting seeks Quaker couple for host position at Friends Center in exchange for rent-free apartment. Write Eleanor Park, Clerk, Host Search Committee, 211 - 27th Ave., #202, San Francisco, CA 94121.

WQF
Would you like to join members in nearly 80 countries who wish to maintain a closeness to Quakerism as a spiritual movement by receiving selected publications from the Wider Quaker Fellowship?
For more information contact:
Wider Quaker Fellowship
1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, (215) 241-7293.
A program of Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas

Pacific Ackworth Reorganizes

by Jean Gerard, Clerk of the Nominating Committee for Pacific Ackworth New Development Committee

When Alice B. Way died in July of this year, she left an extremely valuable resource for Friends to develop.

Many will remember Pacific Ackworth Friends School in Temple City, California, the only Quaker elementary school on the West Coast. It has functioned as a well-loved educational center for hundreds of families during the last forty or more years. It was originally established by four Quaker families with small children on land bought by them in order to provide not only a school which taught Quaker values but a community of like-minded people looking for nonviolent alternatives to the then-current war hysteria.

With the families cooperating, and bringing to join them many others in the San Gabriel Valley, the school continued happily and productively as a parent-cooperative. Though it always functioned on a budget scarcely adequate to provide good salaries, it neverthless attracted staff superior in some ways to the neighboring public schools and had a profoundly constructive influence on many young people who have grown into caring and knowledgeable adults.

As time went by, three of the original four families were called to other Quaker-related projects here and across the country and moved away. John and Alice Way kept the school going, living part of the time on the school property and part of the time in Pasadena. John died in 1986, and shortly after that, Alice herself became ill.

The school has been struggling very hard recently, with insufficient backing either financially or emotionally and spiritually. Now, those concerned about its wonderful and varied possibilities are about to reorganize and re-think what is the best way to use the 4 1/2 acre suburban campus 15 miles from the center of Los Angeles for the benefit of Friends and others.

A nominating committee has been appointed by the Pacific Ackworth Foundation, the group which now owns the property, to search for a variously qualified and experienced group of 10 to 12 persons with Quaker emphasis and know-how, to take a long, hard look at all the details of the present situation plus the many opportunities for future development, and come up with some recommendations.

POSTMASTERS: SEND FORM 3579
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The members of this New Development Committee will have to come from the Southern California area, for convenience in meeting, but suggestions and in-put from Friends in other parts of the country are also very much needed. We eagerly seek the expertise of the whole Quaker community in our efforts to re-shape Pacific Ackworth in the near future. We want it to become a self-supporting agency where a variety of educational projects under Quaker guidance can again be a meaningful part of this locality. There is a great deal of freedom in what may come under consideration at this time, so we are looking not only for specific capabilities, but also for enthusiasm and creativity.

As clerk of the nominating committee for this New Development Committee, I have volunteered to serve as the central place to receive suggestions and comments of all kinds — for either personnel for the new committee or for innovative ways in which this valuable resource can be reorganized for the future. Please write me with your ideas. It is crucial that we engage Friends' participation now and from now on. I may be reached at 6124 Encinitas Ave., Temple City, CA 91780, (818) 286-4308.

Wild Roses by Mary Lou Goertzen